



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**Explore the story at [Baykeeperplasticstory.org](http://Baykeeperplasticstory.org)**

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### **Telling the Story of Plastic Pollution: NY/NJ Baykeeper Unveils New Platform to Engage the Public in Groundbreaking Research**

Keyport, NJ (January 31, 2017) — At a time when credible climate science is threatened by a new administration, NY/NJ Baykeeper is giving the public the power to join in the fight to keep plastic pollution out of the New York Harbor through a new interactive platform that blends scientific research, solution-based reporting, visual storytelling, and citizen action.

NY/NJ Baykeeper, a New Jersey-based environmental organization, today unveiled [baykeeperplasticstory.org](http://baykeeperplasticstory.org), a new website that tells the story of plastic pollution and urges readers who rely on the harbor as a source of recreation, inspiration, or industry to become deeply engaged in the issue.

[Baykeeperplasticstory.org](http://Baykeeperplasticstory.org) was produced through a partnership between NY/NJ Baykeeper, Primer Stories, a digital storytelling agency that creates visual narratives, and Groundsource, an engagement platform that uses social media and text messaging to build community. The partnerships with Primer Stories and Groundsource are supported through the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation.

Through use of animation, illustration, photography and a compelling layout, [baykeeperplasticstory.org](http://baykeeperplasticstory.org) steeps readers deep inside NY/NJ Baykeeper's plastic research data as they trawl the harbor for plastics and explores how the problem came to be. The platform also provides the opportunity to advocate for policy change and stay engaged through a call to action button that invites readers to join the conversation on NY/NJ Baykeeper's Groundsource-powered channels.

The narrative explores plastic's history and the harmful impacts associated with the non-biodegradable material. Instead of biodegrading, the sun's light and water currents shred plastic into tiny pieces, known as microplastic. Microplastic is defined as particles smaller than 5mm, or about the size of a grain of rice. Plastic can absorb harmful chemicals such as flame retardants and DDT and be mistaken by fish and birds for food. At least 663 species are impacted by plastic pollution, according to the USEPA.

"We have a responsibility to protect and keep our waterways clean and healthy so they can be enjoyed by all," said Sandra Meola, NY/NJ Baykeeper Communications and Outreach Associate. "Our research provides evidence of just how prevalent plastic pollution is in our waters. We need to keep up the fight to gather more data and create innovative strategies to alleviate the problem."

At least 165 million plastic pieces are floating within the waters of the New York Harbor, according to [NY/NJ Baykeeper's 2016 research](#) — the first examination of plastic pollution in waters surrounding New York City. Approximately 85 percent of plastics counted were microplastics, considered by experts to cause irreparable damage to aquatic life and habitat.

NY/NJ Baykeeper cites single-use, or "throwaway" plastics, as the culprit for much of the pollution exhibited in the harbor. Single-use plastic products include bags, straws, utensils, bottles, and Styrofoam takeout boxes.

"As the public re-evaluates their relationship with single-use plastics, aggressive waste prevention policy must be a priority," Meola said.

Plastic bag fees and polystyrene bans have proven to be highly effective in other cities such as Washington DC.

"I was excited to work with NY/NJ Baykeeper and Primer Stories on this important issue," said Konstantin Kakaes with Primer Stories. "The profound and lasting impact of disposable plastic in our waters, and the environment in general, deeply worries me and I hope this piece can convey some of that worry to as broad an audience as possible."

Going forward, NY/NJ Baykeeper will work with EPA Region 2's Trash Free Waters Partnership and continue collecting water samples and advocating for regional policies.

The public can help reduce and prevent plastic pollution from entering local waterways by replacing single-use plastics with sustainable, reusable materials. NY/NJ Baykeeper encourages the public to get involved in local cleanup efforts along with contacting their elected officials in support of plastic-reducing legislation.

Explore the story at [baykeeperplasticstory.org](http://baykeeperplasticstory.org)

NY/NJ Baykeeper's site: <http://nynjbaykeeper.org/>

Primer Stories: <http://primerstori.es/>

Geraldine R Dodge: <http://www.grdodge.org/>

Konstantin Kakaes: <http://konstantinkakaes.com/>

Groundsource: <https://www.groundsource.co/>

**About [NY/NJ Baykeeper](#)**

NY/NJ Baykeeper is the citizen advocate of the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary. Since 1989, it has worked to protect, preserve, and restore the environment of the most urban estuary on Earth to benefit its natural and human communities. Through Estuary-wide programs NY/NJ Baykeeper seeks to end pollution, improve public access, conserve and restore public lands, restore aquatic habitats, encourage appropriate and discourage inappropriate development, carry out public education, and work with federal and state regulators and citizen groups as partners in planning a sustainable future for the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary.

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Protecting, preserving, and restoring the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary since 1989.

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